

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A process for producing crosslinked, singulated pulp fibers comprising:

treating never-dried wet pulp received directly from a pulp mill with a crosslinker;

introducing ~~[[a]]~~ said never-dried wet pulp directly from a pulp mill and air into a jet drier;

~~treating said wet pulp with a crosslinker;~~

thereafter drying and crosslinking said pulp in said jet drier to form singulated pulp fibers; and

removing said pulp from said jet drier and separating said dried pulp fibers from said air in said jet drier.

2. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein said crosslinker is selected from the group consisting of polyacrylic acid, glyoxal, malic acid, and tartaric acid.

3. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein said treatment substance is mixed with said wet pulp before introducing said wet pulp into said drier.

4. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein said wet pulp is at least partially dewatered prior to introducing said pulp into said drier.

5. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein said wet pulp is further treated with a treatment substance to reduce the knot content of said pulp fibers, selected from the group consisting of a surfactant and a mineral particulate.

6. (Original) The process of Claim 5, wherein said treatment substance is a mineral particulate.

7. (Original) The process of Claim 5, wherein said treatment substance is a surfactant.

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8. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein said wet pulp is further treated with a substance selected from the group consisting of a hydrophobic material, a superplasticizer, a foam, a surfactant and a water reducing agent.

9. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than 15%.

10. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 9, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than 10%.

11. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 9, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than 5%.

12. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 9, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than 2%.

13. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 5, wherein said dried pulp fibers have a knot count less than 15%.

14. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 13, wherein said dried pulp fibers have a knot count less than 10%.

15. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 13, wherein said dried pulp fibers have a knot count less than 5%.

16. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 13, wherein said dried pulp fibers have a knot count less than 2%.

17. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

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18. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 13%.

19. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 85%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

20. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 2%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

21. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 6, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 2%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 77%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 21%.

22. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 7, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

23. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 7, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 13%.

24. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 7, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 5%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 85%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

25. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 7, wherein the knot count of said dried pulp fibers is less than or equal to 2%, the accepts in said dried pulp fibers are greater than or equal to 80%, and the fines in said dried pulp fibers are less than or equal to 15%.

26. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein said supply pulp has a consistency of from 0.01% to 10% before introduction into said jet drier.

27. (Original) The process of Claim 26, wherein said supply pulp has a consistency of from 3% to 10% before introduction into said drier.

28. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein said singulated pulp is dried to a moisture content of 2 percent to 10 percent by weight.

29-39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A process for producing crosslinked, singulated pulp fibers comprising:

treating never-dried wet pulp received directly from a pulp mill with a crosslinker;

introducing air and ~~[[a]]~~ said never-dried wet pulp directly from a pulp mill without mechanical defibering into a jet drier;

~~treating said wet pulp with a crosslinker;~~

thereafter drying said pulp in said jet drier to form singulated pulp fibers; and

removing said pulp from said jet drier and separating said dried pulp fibers from said air in said jet drier.